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ABSTRACT

A study used Carol Gilligan's work on the legitimization of the female voice to examine the degree to which care and justice perspectives are expressed in the voice of television character "Murphy Brown" in the situation comedy of the same name. Two episodes of the show were analyzed to examine how Murphy resolved moral dilemmas. Although the Murphy Brown character utilizes both the female voice of care and the male voice of justice, she speaks at work most often through the justice perspective. However, in coping with moral dilemmas in her personal life, Murphy initially utilizes the justice perspective, then resolves the dilemma through the female orientation of care. Moreover, a third orientation which does not appear to fit into either of the above is the self-serving voice. Murphy uses this voice when colleagues or authority figures have conflicting views or methods on work-related issues. When Murphy fails to get her own way using the voice of reason, she resorts to the self-serving voice, which includes such behaviors as playing tricks on her boss or colleagues and/or plotting against those who attempt to prevent her from doing the job the way she believes it should be done. The dilemma of which perspective may be most appropriate to voice is a concern for many women; however, results of the analysis make it clear that Murphy must adopt the male voice of justice to succeed in the work place. (Twenty-seven references are attached.) (KEH)

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FIGHTING BACK LIKE A MAN: THE MORALITY OF MURPHY BROWN

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ABSTRACT

Carol Gilligan suggests that women have *a different voice* in the perception, description and resolution of moral dilemmas. Gilligan describes the female voice as one of care and the male voice as one of justice. Gilligan's theory will be utilized to examine the degree to which the care and justice perspectives are expressed in the voice of TV character *Murphy Brown* (Candice Bergen) from the situation comedy of the same name. With a limited number of situation comedies on prime time television that reflect the increasing number of single career women, *Murphy Brown* is a stand out. Winner of the Golden Globe award as well as an Emmy for best actress in a comedy series in 1988, Bergen portrays an aggressive TV news magazine anchor. Through the character of Murphy Brown, the viewer is shown that women must still adopt the male voice of justice to succeed. The female voice of care is used primarily to resolve moral dilemmas in her personal life. My analysis suggests the existence of a third perspective, referred to as the self serving voice.

> I would just like to say that I absolutely love Murphy Brown and I'm so glad that they finally portrayed somebody, a woman being aggressive...cause I work as a cocktail waitress and let me tell ya, I love the show and I always think of her every time the guys give me a hard time, I stick it back to them, and I love the way she does it.
>
> I just wanted to tell Candice that she's not the only Murphy Brown in the world. My mom is Murphy Brown. She's had to fight in a male dominated job situation for twenty-five years to get where she is today. And I'm just very proud of my mother, and I wanted to thank Candice because she portrays women in such a positive light now. Thank you very much.

These comments are from two different female callers who were viewing the *Donahue* show on February 22, 1989 which featured the cast of the prime time situation comedy, *Murphy Brown*. Much of the feedback Bergen received from the callers and the in-studio audience focused *not* on her clothes, her beauty, or how she stays so slim, but on the character she portrays: a renowned television journalist with an aggressive voice. The comments above illustrate an appreciation and identification with this character.

Method

Carol Gilligan's (1977, 1982,1984,1987,1988) groundbreaking work on the legitimization of the female voice will be used to analyze Murphy Brown as she confronts moral dilemmas in both her personal and professional life. Specifically, Gilligan's work on the

care and justice perspectives (Gilligan,1977, 1982, 1988; Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988; Lyons, 1988) will be used to analyze how Murphy handles such moral dilemmas as the question of single parenthood and the use of sensational stories as a way to boost ratings. Based on this analysis I will conclude that although the *Murphy Brown* character utilizes both voices, she speaks most often through the justice perspective. Specifically, the male orientation of justice is utilized primarily in work related dilemmas. However, in coping with moral dilemmas in her personal life, Murphy initially utilizes the justice perspective, then resolves the dilemma through the female orientation of care.

Moreover, a third orientation which does not appear to fit into either of the above will be labeled the self-serving voice. Murphy utilizes this voice when colleagues or authority figures have conflicting views or methods on work related issues. When Murphy fails to get her own way using the voice of reason, it will be shown that she may resort to the self-serving voice. The self-serving voice includes such behaviors as playing juvenile tricks on her boss or colleagues and/or plotting against those who attempt to prevent her from doing the job the way Murphy believes it should be done.

The dilemma of which perspective may be most appropriate to voice is a concern for many women:

> "If a woman is assertive, she may be seen as manly, unfeminine or bitchy," say Gruber, who is on sabbatical at the Wellesley Research Center for Women at Wellesley College. "If she is not assertive, she is labeled as someone who can't tow the line or someone who doesn't know how to behave

as a professional" (Dolezal 1988, p. 1B).

This quote illustrates the dilemma women face as they voice themselves in their daily lives. Women are punished for not adhering to the male voice as well as being punished if they do - a double bind situation with no clear resolution. Through her research, Gilligan (1977, 1982)) has sought to legitimate the female voice in the area of moral development and the ways in which young girls and adult women resolve moral dilemmas. Gilligan has identified two distinct voices from her studies: "One voice speaks of connection, not hurting, care, and response; and one speaks of equality, reciprocity, justice, and rights" (1988, p. 8). Gilligan(1988) advances that "traits such as care and connection are salient in women's thinking, imply a view of self and other as interdependent and of relationships as networks created and sustained by attention and response" (p. 8).

Gilligan (1988) states that an individual voicing "such traits as justice and autonomy suggest a view of the individual as separate and of relationships as either hierarchical or contractual, bound by the alternatives of constraint and cooperation" (p.8). Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) categorize these voices into two separate perspectives: justice and care. The justice perspective is explained as drawing "attention to problems of inequality and oppression and holds up an ideal of reciprocity and equal respect" (p. 73). The care perspective is explained as drawing "attention to problems of detachment or abandonment and holds up an ideal of attention and response to need" (p. 73).

Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) found that although each perspective is represented in both genders' thoughts, women are more likely to utilize the care perspective and males are more likely to utilize the

justice perspective in resolving moral dilemmas (p. 82). The heuristic value of Gilligan's (1977, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1988) ground breaking work on the value and legitimization of the female voice has been expanded by a plethora of scholars (Lyons 1983; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule 1986; Attanucci 1988; Gilligan and Attanucci 1988; Gilligan and Pollack 1988; Jack and Jack 1988; Stewart 1987).

Interestingly, none of the published work has utilized Gilligan's theory to analyze women in prime time television. With a growing number of women behind the scenes at the networks, this would seem an appropriate time to study the popular culture domain.

Current Trends in the Female Voice on Prime Time

Waters and Huck (1989) summarize the evolution of the female television character:

> June Cleaver stayed home and nurtured her nuclear family. Mary (Tyler Moore) Richards got a job, but only as a go-fer for the guys. Chrissy in "Three's Company" was most liberated in a bath towel. Alexis is in "Dynasty" has power, but that makes her evil. Meanwhile, Claire Huxtable, as television's current paragon mom, can do everything but convince us she's real (p. 50).

The most appropriate term to describe the 1988/89 prime time female voice of such characters as *Roseanne* and *Murphy Brown* is aggressive. Clearly the 1988/89 season reflected the networks' recognition that "times they have a changed"...and according to the feedback from the fans and critics (Waters and Huck 1989) of *Murphy Brown*, the "commercial culture" (Gitlin, 1987) has responded not a moment too soon.

> "Nice and sweet are out," declares "Murphy Brown" executive producer Diane English, 40. TV's new women aren't trying to please other people. Saying what's on your mind is in. Not being afraid of what people think of you is in. You have to have edges to work today (Waters and Huck, 1989, p. 49).

Waters and Huck (1989) cite a variety of reasons for the changing voice of the female characters portrayed on prime time. First, while males are turning to cable, females 18 - 49 now control which prime time network shows are watched. Second, because research has revealed that women are the primary purchasers of the items advertised, networks are now adapting their programming to them. Finally, an increasing percentage of women are working in the television industry as writers, producers, and heads of independent production companies.

In a study on television's single professional women, Reep and Dambrot (1987) report that prime time is showing " a less stereotypical portrayal of working women than in the past and a serious attempt to present realistically the problems of professional women" (p. 380). In addition, Reep and Dambrot (1987) found that these women focused their attention on their careers, not housework, are shown making decisions, are financially successful, stimulated by their work, but lack a steady romantic interest. The lack of an ongoing intimate relationship reflects the deeply imbedded dominant ideology which suggests that women cannot have a successful career and a relationship simultaneously. "These women have achieved success at the price of traditional romantic

fulfillment" (Reep and Dambrot, 1987, p. 381). Bergen's description of her character supports this finding:

> "Here's a woman whose career is soaring and vital, but her personal life is the Sahara. She can't even get a date on Saturday night. Some TV journalists tell me that her life isn't desperate *enough*. Their career momentum has caught them up, and when they look over their shoulders, it's too late-for relationships, babies, the lower-key domestic life that's part of their natural sensibility (Segell, 1989, p. 223).

Indeed, The first season of Murphy Brown presented a woman who lacked a steady relationship with a man - beyond her house painter, Eldin.

The Show

Set in Washington, high profile reporter Murphy Brown (Candice Bergen), age forty and single, works for a television news magazine program called FYI. Although Murphy is the central focus, there are six other supporting characters who make this program successful. These supporting characters consist of: executive producer -Miles Silverberg (Grant Shaud), anchor - Corky Sherwood (Faith Ford), anchor - Jim Dial (Charles Kimbrough), investigative reporter - Frank Fontana (Joe Regalbuto), house painter - Eldin Burnecky (Robert Pastorelli), and bar owner - Phil (Pat Corley). The episodes take place in the FYI offices and studio, Phil's bar, and Murphy's home where Eldin (the house painter) seems a permanent fixture. The series had eleven Emmy nominations (Green, 1989) for it's premiere season, with Candice Bergen winning the comedy actress award (Rhule and Middlebrook, 1989). Despite critics' raves and

Bergen's plethora of in-depth interviews (Walker,1989; Amory, 1989; Segell, 1989; Kramer,1989; Sheff, 1989; Zehme, 1989), the show finished its first season in 30th place (Green, 1989) and has yet to reach a top twenty rank as the current season progresses.

Other situation comedies such as *Designing Women, Kate and Allie, Roseanne,* and *Who's the Boss* portray women voicing various levels of assertiveness in their personal and professional lives. None of these shows however, have expressed the voice of the single professional female as boldly as *Murphy Brown* Creator and executive producer Diane English and her staff are responsible for this unique character.[1] Murphy is shown as an active, driven professional who voices her opinions about her work and her colleagues' work - whether they like it or not. Bergen states

> I love her directness. I'm always somewhat in awe of people who are indifferent about what other people think. I've never been single-minded about a career. I've never had the kind of self-confidence Murphy has (in Sheff, 1989, p. 66).

> I love Murphy, her larger-than-lifeness, her humor, her edges. She's intolerant and impatient and crabby. She has real principles and opinions. And she doesn't suffer fools (in Kramer, 1989, p. 24).

The following section will utilize Gilligan's perspectives of justice and care to analyze the voices of Murphy Brown (from the premiere season) as she attempts to resolve moral dilemmas. Two episodes in particular were selected for this analysis, on the basis of moral dilemma-like story lines. One is taken from her personal life - the possibility of single parenthood [2] and the second from her professional life - the use of sensational stories on FYI [3]. The first

example illustrates Murphy's use of the justice perspective as she approaches the dilemma and her application of the voice of care as she resolves it.

The Voices of Murphy Brown

The episode aired on December 12, 1988 focused on Murphy's desire for a child and her exploration of the options available to her as a single woman of forty. The show opens in Murphy's living room as she showers her pregnant friend Lisa with gifts for her unborn baby. Lisa shares with Murphy the joys of pregnancy and confronts her about her own childless state:

Lisa: "Murphy, I gotta tell ya, I know our mothers said this, I know pregnant women always say this, but this you gotta try...this is the greatest."

Murphy: "No thanks, I wear very expensive shoes and I like to see them."

Lisa: "Come on now, don't tell me you've never even thought about it."

Murphy: "Sure I've thought about it. But what kind of mother would I be ? The phone rings and I'm on a midnight flight to Sudan. What if my kids wound up hating me ? What if they wrote a book about me and it got made into a movie and Loni Anderson played me ? It's very scary stuff, Lisa."

After Lisa convinces her to feel the baby move, Murphy finds she doesn't want to remove her hand:

Lisa: "Murphy, I gotta get my coat on !"

Murphy: "Yea, okay."

Lisa: "Murph, I need my stomach back."

Murphy: "It was your idea. Wow !! That was incredible."

Lisa: "Look, Murphy, I know what you can do to people who rag on you about something, so if I'm willing to risk this it must be pretty important. Murphy, do not miss this experience, or you'll regret it till the day you die."

Convinced, Murphy takes immediate action. Being currently unattached, her first move is to go to a sperm bank. After her disguise fails to fool the receptionist who inquires as to the reason for her visit, Murphy responds:

Murphy: "Researching a story, and I was wondering, for my story... Many women about 40, with no particular man in their lives yet wanting to know what its like to have a baby and have decided that adoption is certainly an option for the future, but would first like to experience child birth if they can...probably come here, right ?"

Receptionist: "Right."

Back at the office, chatting informally with her best friend and colleague Frank, Murphy decides that having him "fertilize her egg" is the perfect solution.

Murphy: "Frank, I want to ask you something."

Frank: "What?"

Murphy: "It's a favor."

Frank: "So ask me."

Murphy: "It's a big favor." ....
"I want you to father my child."

Frank: "Excuse me."

Murphy: "I want to have a baby Frank. I need a father. I think it could work."

Frank: "You want to have sex with me, oh my god..."

Murphy: "Frank, please, I don't want to have sex with you, I'm talking about fertilizing an egg. We don't even have to be in the same room. ...Just listen to me a minute, okay. For a long time now I felt like I was 23, and if I wanted a baby it was my choice. Suddenly I'm forty, and all my options are disappearing. I don't want to look back and feel like I missed something.
Don't you ever think about this, Frank ?"

Frank: "Yes, but it doesn't involve you, Murphy, you're my best friend, we're pals."

Murphy: "That's why this is so perfect ! We'll be pals forever, no divorce, no custody battles. Our kid will be well traveled and smart and funny and a good public speaker."

Murphy successfully persuades Frank to go to the sperm bank after convincing him that neither one of them is getting any younger, and that their most "enduring relationship is with the sky cap at Dullas airport". However, after his appointment Frank breaks the news to Murphy that "sperm are swimmers, Murphy, and I don't have a Mark Spitz in the bunch". Frank presents the alternatives:

Frank: "There are two alternatives. One is to wait a few months, maybe the situation will improve, maybe not. The other is to proceed by doing it the regular way."

Murphy: "You mean actual contact?"

After a brief discussion, they both agree that it's worth a try. The next scene is at Murphy's house where they attempt to become intimate. After numerous uncomfortable false starts, Murphy voices her need for a stronger connection, her dream about a future with a man she could love.

Murphy: "Frank, you'll hate me forever. But I can't go through with this."

Frank: "Oh, don't do this to me, I'm ready. Not this second. I mean I'm ready for a kid."

Murphy: "I'm sorry, Frank. It's just that there's this side of me... it keeps coming out. I try to squelch it but it just doesn't work sometimes. I have this image of me in a wedding dress. There's brides maids and flower girls...and there's this great guy standing at the end of the aisle."

Frank: "This is frightening."

Murphy: "Wait, it gets worse. There's a harpist."

Frank: "Oh geeze...."

Murphy: "I know, it's not me, it'll never be me. But maybe if I wait just a little while there's still a chance I could have a baby with someone I love."

The episode ends with Murphy clearly adopting the perspective of care. Despite the calm and equitable arrangement (the voice of justice) she designed for herself and Frank, she decides to hold out for love. Murphy is still seeking the sense of connection and care

Gilligan describes as part of the female voice. At the beginning of the episode, her friend Lisa seems to be using the female voice as she tries to persuade Murphy to consider having a baby. Murphy then approaches this situation from the perspective of justice... i.e. what would be the most sensible, equitable choice given the circumstances. Murphy reasons that due to the demands of their jobs, she and Frank have very little opportunity to develop or maintain a long term relationship with anyone. Murphy further argues that as best friends they genuinely like and respect one another, and the clincher - neither one is getting any younger.

However, it is through the perspective of care that she chooses to resolve this particular conflict. Murphy apologetically steps back into the female voice as she describes her fantasy wedding. Seemingly, she is sorry she cannot resolve the dilemma using the justice perspective. Thus, Murphy employs first a perspective of justice, then the perspective of care as she works through this particular moral dilemma. Evidently hope springs eternal for the single professional woman on prime time too.

The second episode to be analyzed focuses on a moral dilemma Murphy and her colleagues confront in the work setting. Aired on February 27, 1989, this episode addresses the problem of FYI's sagging ratings. The episode begins with Murphy receiving a telephone message from Walter Cronkite:

Murphy: "He said he saw my segment on the on the greenhouse effect last night. "A wonderful expose of corporate irresponsibility and government short sightedness. Enjoyed it immensely." Frank, did you hear this ? Walter Cronkite called, he said he saw my

segment last night and he enjoyed it immensely. How 'bout that?"

Frank: "That's real nice, but let's get serious. Does Walt have a Nielsen box?"

Murphy: "What is it lately ? Everybody's so ratings conscious. It's making me crazy. Are you a success if forty million people watch the show and a failure if only eighteen million people watch it?"

Corky: "Good morning everybody, has Miles come down with the ratings yet?"

Frank: "No, he's seven minutes late."

Corky: "Oh, I wish he'd hurry up that little turtle. Do you think they'll be any better? I hate coming in second."

Murphy: "Let me tell you something, Corky. After sixteen years in this business, I've learned that ratings are baloney...It's the quality of the work that counts and that's all."

After more discussion with the other anchors, Miles comes in and reveals that their ratings have continued to slip for the third week in a row. The slippage is due to the viewing audience preference for a "Geraldo" type called Jerry Gold who presents titilating stories such as "the tragic plight of sex crazed registered nurses". Miles revealed that Gold got a forty-two share in the ratings, FYI got only a thirteen.

Miles: "I hate this. We work hard on our shows. We go through the wall to stay accurate and intelligent. Only to get blown out of the water by Nurse Judy and her tongue depressor." ...

Well there was a suggestion from a network V.P. It was only a suggestion And keep in mind I'm only conveying it. The network feels that maybe we could make some of our stories more intellectually accessible to a broader spectrum of viewers."

Jim: "Give them some T. and A. Is that it? Fine. Why don't I anchor the show in a tank top and bicycle pants?"

Frank: "Miles, I've been working for the past two weeks on a story about the homeless. What do they want me to do, find the lighter side?"

Murphy: "You can tell the network we're not a bunch of journalistic prostitutes. They can take their story and stick it in the file with "Hello Larry" and Pam Ewing's dream."

The above excerpt provides evidence for the existence of the justice perspective. Murphy and the other reporters are committed to doing a quality show that is respectful to the audience. Yet, admittedly they are angry that another show is using sensationalism to appeal and win over the viewers. They want to maintain high ratings because of their quality programming, not lose in the ratings because of it. They believe they have a "right" to maintain their format and to continue to present quality news and information to their audience from an "objective" point of view. Furthermore, the desire to remain "autonomous" to the tinkerings of the network executives is clearly voiced. The concepts of "rights" ,"autonomy" and "objectivity" are the same terms used to describe the morality of justice (Lyons, 1988, p.35). Interestingly, it is through Frank that the care perspective is voiced.

In the following scene, meeting Murphy and Jim at Phil's bar, Frank describes a moving interaction he had with one particular homeless father and daughter. Frank reveals how emotionally involved he has become with his story on the homeless.

Frank: "Who is the toughest person you know? Name the one person capable of enduring more pain than anyone?"

Murphy: "Marilyn Quayle?"

Frank: "Right here, come on, I jump out of planes. I ride with green peace, I've covered Belfast, Beruit, Nicaragua. Face it, I make Ollie North look like a florist."

Murphy: "Get on with it, Frank, you smell like fish."

Frank: "I'm working on this story about the homeless, right. And I'm just tired of dealing with government statisticians, the economic theorists, the bureaucrats, so I took it to the street. I went down along the Northwest quadrant over near the state department, sat around with a few of the guys...Then, then I met this guy named Ed, about my age. He's got a daughter - 6 or 7, Maureen - Mo. Big brown eyes, oh about this tall. They've got nothing. Ed - he lost his wife, lost his job, so their living in an abandoned car, an old ford. He said to me if I ever needed a place to stay warm, I could their trunk. I said, no thanks. So, I'm walking away and all of a sudden I hear this little voice yell my name. It's Mo. She comes running after me and she says: "Mr. I've been saving this, but you can have it. My Dad says it's okay." And she hands me thirty-seven cents - cash. So you know, you're a journalist, a reporter, you get this kind of a shell, things don't get to you. Well I walked

> all the way back here and all I could think about was how I have the power to show this to people. And maybe if they know, they'll do something about it. But here's the funny part. Nobody is gonna see this story. They're gonna be watching Jerry Gold..."

Frank initially sets the record straight about how "tough" he is, prior to voicing his perspective of care on this story. Somehow, this *justifies* his expression of the caring voice. After listening to Frank's experience, Murphy and Jim are determined to find a way to get Frank's story aired along with a major portion of the audience to view it. They exchange various ideas that could possibly boost the ratings, such as bigger newspaper ads or more promotion, but they conclude that those approaches will *not* help.

Murphy: "Who are we kidding - we're going to get creamed. I hate this. Really makes you want to fight fire with fire...doesn't it ?"

Jim: "Yes, but we have to resist that feeling."

Murphy: "I know."

Jim: "Although, we wouldn't really have to compromise our standards if we, it it was just the one segment leading into Franks."

Murphy: "Right. Just one. Something that would really get people to watch."

Jim: "And we would never do it again."

Murphy: "No, never again. Just the one time."

However, Miles has been negotiating with the network - defending the integrity of FYI to his superiors. The justice perspective

reigns as Miles reassures Frank, Murphy and Jim of his commitment to quality programming:

> Miles: "Frank, I saw some of your film on the homeless, incredible work, and so moving. It can really have an impact. Listen, guys, I've been thinking over this network suggestion thing and I want you to know I'm behind you one hundred and fifty percent. Even though taking such a stand could cost me my job, I walked into that V.P.'s office and laid it on the line. I said, "FYI is a news organization of integrity. We will not pander to the public's thirst for sensationalism. Not now, not ever."

Mile's speech echoes the elements of the justice perspective; his commitment to maintaining FYI's integrity are clearly stated. However, while Miles has been defending the show, another voice has been at work:

> Murphy: "We've had a change of heart Miles. We want the people to see Frank's piece on the homeless...and the only way to make that happen is to pull a stunt. Do a segment that is so provocative, so sensational that everyone will watch and knock Jerry Gold right on his astronomical ego."

The opening segment would have made Jerry Gold proud: "The Skin Trade: Retail Sex in America". Murphy's guests include, "Homemakers Against Gratuitous Sex" and "Hookers Organization for American Rights". In true sensational television style, the segment concludes with the women in a fist fight.

The next day at the office, the staff discuss their feelings regarding the show. Jim says he feels "cheap" and Murphy echoes her agreement. Miles says that his parents called and his father wants the $45,000 it cost him to put Miles through school and his mother is going back to her maiden name. Guilt consumes Miles, Jim, and Murphy who now believe they made a very immoral choice by airing the piece, despite their good intentions. However, after Miles receives word that they clobbered Jerry Gold in the ratings, won in every major city, and held fifty million viewers for the entire hour they feel both euphoria and guilt:

Frank: "Last week we had a measly twelve million viewers, ... now we're number one!!!"

Murphy: "And it was so easy. It was so easy."

Frank: "Hey, Murph, next week you're doing that story on medicaid right?"

Murphy: "Right."

Frank: "Okay, so I'll do that thing on transsexual ballroom dancing. We'll give it a real news story slant."

Murphy: "I mean, it's not like we're selling out."

Jim: "We're only going to do it a little each week."

Miles: "Just enough to get people to watch our good stuff."

Jim: "I've worked in this business thirty years. I've never had ratings like this before. Well, I'm sorry but it feels good."

Miles: "This is what success is right? People watching the show?"

Murphy: "Yea, people watching the show...

the way they slow down on the highway
to see an accident."

Miles: "But we did what we set out to do.
We got what we want.
Didn't we?"

Throughout this episode, Murphy and her colleagues wrestle with their moral beliefs regarding ethical practices in journalism. The question for each of them, *was it all worth it,* remains unresolved. Murphy wants to do a sensational segment (immoral ?) for moral reasons (to have Frank's segment be viewed by a large audience). At the end of the episode, one is left to wonder how Murphy and her colleagues will resolve this moral dilemma. The next section suggests there may be some moral dilemmas which cannot be resolved exclusively through the voice of justice or care.

The echoes of a third voice

Through the process of using Gilligan's theory for this analysis, it became evident that some of Murphy's responses to the dilemmas she confronts fit neither the justice or the care perspectives. Specifically, the manifestation of a third voice occurs whenever Murphy fails to get her own way and takes unorthodox steps to achieve her goal...because she believes in it. This voice will be termed the "self-serving" perspective and is utilized by Murphy when she sees that direct confrontation and reasoning fail to alter the decision or action of a boss or colleague. Murphy "regresses" to this voice when she feels powerless. In order to get out from under this stage, Murphy will manipulate anyone and anything to get the job done "her way", which of course she perceives as the "right" way.

Murphy was the primary source of this voice in the 1988/89 season. In the 1989/90 season, Murphy, Corky, and Frank are shown utilizing self-serving tactics in one episode where Jim's job is threatened by a potential network shuffle on FYI. The episode (written by Kathryn Baker) opens with the network sending Jim to Libya for a two week stint as a foreign correspondent. Jim has not done this sort of work since 1973 and when the network brings in a young, handsome, blonde male named Miller Redfield to fill-in, Murphy and Frank become suspicious. Their fears escalate as they observe the network's top brass come to the set in person to congratulate Miller for his performance on FYI. Murphy confronts Miles with her suspicions who had no idea the network had anything permanent in mind.

Miles: "I believed those guys when they said they said they were just using Miller to fill in."

Murphy: "We can't just roll over and let this happen. Meeting at my house tonight."

The next scene takes place in Murphy's living room where Frank, Corky and Murphy brainstorm ways to save Jim's job (because Miles is in management, he refuses to attend the meeting). At the beginning of the meeting, Murphy and Frank discuss possibilities from the justice perspective. Murphy suggests a letter writing campaign than discards the idea because it would be too time consuming. In addition, Frank indicates the futility of using an honest and direct approach with the network:

Frank: "Why don't we just go to the network and tell them how we feel...that Jim has depth and experience and that Miller is a meat puppet. The network has got to listen to reason.

Oh, help me, I'm hallucinating."

Corky: "I've got it...let's short circuit his ear piece and fry his brains out."

Murphy: "There is something to be said for making him look bad on the air."

Murphy, Frank and Corky put their plan into action on the set of FYI. Murphy fakes a coughing spell at the beginning of her interview with Jim (via satellite to Libya) and motions to Miller that he should take over. Miller, completely ill-prepared and ignorant about the overseas segment, fails miserably in his attempt to cover for Murphy. Both Frank and Corky ignore his plight and remain silent. Miles indirectly yet powerfully assists the anchors in their plot by keeping the camera directly on Miller for the entire segment. Their scheme succeeds in making Miller appear inexperienced and ineffectual to the network brass who proceeded to send him to an overseas bureau for one year to learn the ropes.

Throughout this particular episode, evidence for a third self-serving voice is presented. As argued above, when attempts at the justice perspective fail to resolve an important work related dilemma, Murphy as well as her colleagues (in this episode) will attempt other methods to achieve their goal. Interestingly, it is with a combination of the self-serving and care perspectives that Murphy, Frank, Miles, and Corky resolve this particular dilemma. They resort to self-serving tactics because they care about Jim and want to remain a team. Moreover, they often refer to one another as "family" in the current season. This particular episode illustrates the lengths Murphy and her colleagues will take to maintain the FYI family.

Evidence of this self-serving voice is further exhibited when Murphy engages in trick playing on her colleagues or bosses. This behavior can be described as getting back at those who have prevented Murphy from achieving a goal... regardless of the authority figure. For example, in an episode aired on March 27, 1989 (written by Korby Siamis), Miles tells Murphy that he is assigning Corky to work with her on a major assignment. Murphy is miserable about his decision and presents legitimate reasons (justice perspective) for why he should change his mind. When he refuses to alter his decision, Murphy decides to get back at Miles. That night she has fourteen pizzas delivered to his apartment between the hours of midnight and 5:00 A.M. The next night she has a polka band playing under his window. In order to keep Corky out of her way while she researches the story on Edward Mocrehouse, she sends her to the Moorehouse mechanic for the entire day as well as ordering her to go through all Moorehouse's garbage.

While this trick playing behavior adds great comedic value to the show, it also undermines the image of the professional female that Murphy represents. On the one hand, the audience is shown a successful woman, on the other, they are shown someone who is difficult to work with. When Murphy exhibits this particular voice, two interpretations are possible: a negative view of women in the workplace -or- a forceful, determined "do it at any cost" go-getter.

Conclusion

Although Gilligan's work on the female voice has been utilized by many scholars to study children and adult women in a variety of settings (e.g. adolescents, medical students, lawyers, and mothers),

popular culture has remained virtually unexplored. With the increasing number of women working in prime time television as creators, producers, and writers a noticeable change has occurred in the prime time programs aired. Female characters are boldly portrayed in a variety of occupations. Through this analysis it has been shown that *Murphy Brown* is capable of expressing both the justice and care perspective in her resolution of moral dilemmas. However, the justice perspective reigns as Murphy's primary mode of resolving moral dilemmas. This perspective was found to dominate her actions in both the professional and private life story lines analyzed. The care perspective was found to dominate *her resolution* of personal life dilemmas and was not generally manifested until the concluding minutes of the episodes under study. In addition, the echo of a third, self-serving voice seems to manifest when the justice perspective fails to resolve dilemmas to Murphy's satisfaction.

Perhaps the justice perspective has been Murphy's predominant voice because the creator and writers believe that the audience will not find a truly successful career woman operating primarily from the perspective of care *believable or entertaining*. The short lived series, *Baby Boom* (NBC, 1988/89 season) starring Kate Jackson, who operated primarily from the perspective of care, illustrates that the audience wanted more bite in their prime time working women. *Baby Boom* was shelved after the airing of only six episodes (Gunther 1988).

Based on this analysis, it is clear that Murphy must adopt the male voice of justice to succeed in the workplace. From all indications it appears as though the male voice will continue to

dominate throughout the current season. In describing Murphy's character for the 1989/90 season, creator Diane English advanced that "Murphy will be little changed. She won't lose any of her tough edges" (Green, 1989, p.3 D). For the time being, *Murphy Brown* will continue *fighting back like a man.*

NOTES

1. *Murphy Brown* is a Shukovsky/English production in association with Warner Brothers. Personnel in general for the 1988/89 and 1989/90 season are as follows: Producers - Tom Seeley, Norm Gunzenhauser, Russ Woody, Gary Dontzig, Steven Peterman, Barnet Kellman. Co-producer - Deborah Smith, consulting producer Korby Siamis, executive producers- Diane English and Joel Shukovsky. Director: Barnett Kellman. Writers: Diane English, Sy Dukane and Denise Moss, Russ Woody, Korby Siamis, Kathryn Baker, Craig Hoffman, Gary Dontzig and Steven Peterman. Music: Steve Dorff.

2. This episode first aired on December 12, 1988 and was written by Korby Siamis.

3. This episode first aired on February 27, 1989 and was written by Russ Woody.

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